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30 December 2005

SCG100786.E

Serbia and Montenegro: Treatment of ethnic Albanians in Serbia and Montenegro, excluding the United Nations administered province of Kosovo (January 2005 - December 2005)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Education

In its 2005 report on Serbia and Montenegro, Human Rights Watch (HRW) claimed that despite the fact that ethnic Albanians constitute a majority of the population in southern Serbia, the region's school curriculum fails to incorporate Albanian culture and history (13 Jan. 2005). According to *Country Reports 2004*, Albanian parents in Montenegro shared this concern, despite the fact that ethnic Albanian children in Montenegro have access to Albanian language education (28 Feb. 2005, Montenegro-Sec. 5).

In its 2005 report, the International and Refugee Board, Ottawa

Montenegro organized demonstrations in issue," school children carried "aggressive information on these incidents could not time constraints.

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

ned that residents of Podgorica, in Serbian Orthodox churches on the (27). Further or corroborating lted by the Research Directorate within

Government

While ethnic Albanian leaders of so critical about the lack of ethnic Albanian proportional representation in the police they comprised a majority of the popular Interior Ministry, the Organization for Se among the organizations that put together working groups in an effort to improve relations between southern Serbia's police forces and local ethnic Albanians (ibid.).

evo, Bujanovac, and Medvedja were ethnic Albanians in southern Serbia had e governments of municipalities where 2005, Serbia-Sec. 5). The Serbian (OSCE), and local municipalities were

In February 2005, Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica was reported to have encouraged ethnic Albanians to join the Coordination Body for Southern Serbia (CBSS) (FoNet 8 Feb. 2005). The CBSS, chaired by Rasim Ljajic, aims to strengthen ties between Belgrade and local administrations, and includes programs to stimulate the local economy and improve the judiciary and police services of the region (TV Pink 10 Nov. 2005). However, in March 2005, Agence France-Presse (AFP) reported that "most ethnic Albanians from the southern region [of Serbia] have followed [a boycott of Serbian institutions] for several years" (4 Mar. 2005).

There is an "SOS" hotline run by the Serbian Ministry for Human and Minority Rights that seeks to assist minorities and others who have human rights concerns (*Country Reports 2004* 28 Feb. 2005, Serbia-Sec. 5), although further details on its use, if any, by ethnic Albanians could not be found within time constraints.

Police

In March 2004, rioting directed against ethnic Serbs in Kosovo led to retaliatory attacks in Serbia against non-Serbian minorities (AI 2005), including ethnic Albanians (HRW 10 Oct. 2005). HRW described these latter attacks as "particularly violent" (HRW 10 Oct. 2005). Citing the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia (HCS), *Country Reports 2004* reported that there were 40 attacks between 17 and 21 March 2004 against ethnic Albanian and Bosniak property in the province of Vojvodina (28 Feb. 2005, Serbia-Sec. 2.c). HRW reported that police officers in Novi Sad, Vojvodina, "stood by" when, on 17 March 2004, ethnic Albanian shops were "attacked and seriously damaged" (13 Jan. 2005). However, Amnesty International (AI) reported on the arrest by Serbian authorities of more than one hundred individuals in the wake of these attacks, including 24 who had attacked Albanian and Gorani businesses in Vojvodina (AI 2005).

In January 2005, thousands of ethnic Albanians gathered in Presevo to protest the killing of an ethnic Albanian teenager by a Serbian soldier (Dow Jones 9 Jan. 2005; RFE/RL 11 Jan. 2005). This killing led to widely publicized calls by ethnic Albanians to replace Serbian soldiers with multinational peacekeeping forces (ibid.). However, Serbian news agency FoNet quoted a senior Serbian police official as stating that the military and police would not withdraw from southern Serbia (16 Jan. 2005).

According to *Country Reports 2004*, while most police officers in Serbia and Montenegro were Serbs, some were ethnic Albanians (28 Feb. 2005, Serbia-Sec. 1.d). However, *Country Reports 2004* stated that most members of the Multiethnic Police Force in southern Serbia were ethnic Albanians and Serbs (28 Feb. 2005, Serbia-Sec. 1.d).

A number of ethnic Albanians reportedly complained about police inaction following a series of armed robberies in southern Serbia between May and July 2004 (*Country Reports 2004* 28 Feb. 2005, Serbia-Sec. 5). Further details on the outcome of these complaints could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within time constraints.

Politics

According to *Country Reports 2004*, political participation among ethnic Albanians in Serbia was low at the federal level, though some ran in the elections in Presevo (ibid., Serbia-Sec. 3). However, in Montenegro, ethnic Albanians were said to participate in all elections, and Montenegrin law guaranteed that four parliamentary seats would be reserved for ethnic Albanians (ibid., Montenegro-Sec. 3).

An article published on 16 November 2005 by *Courrier des Balkans* warned that a November 2005 referendum to oust the ethnic Albanian mayor of Presovo, Riza Halimi, could further destabilize the delicate ethnic balance in southern Serbia (*Courrier des Balkans* 16 Nov. 2005).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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Publications: *Encyclopedia of the World's Minorities 2005*.

Internet Sites, including: British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Freedom House, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia (HCHRS), Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR), Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).